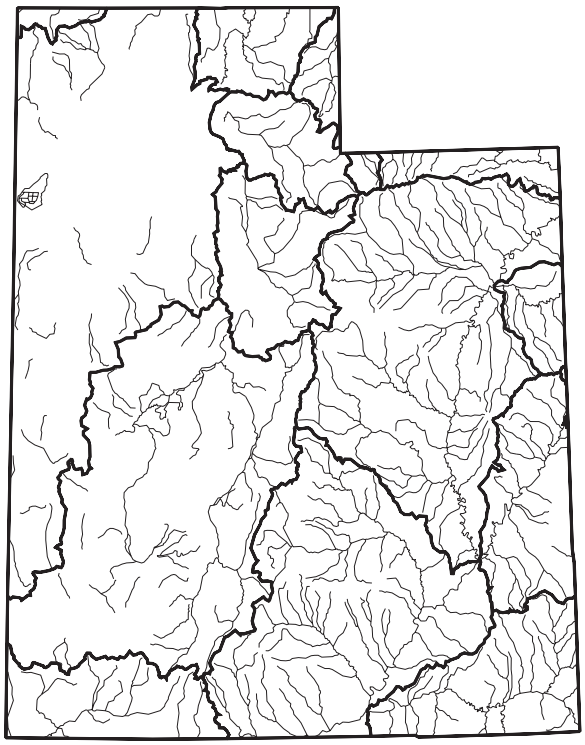
Utah



Basin Boundaries
(USGS 6-Digit Hydrologic Unit)

For a copy of the Utah 1996 305(b) report, contact:

Thomas W. Toole
Utah Department of Environmental Quality
Division of Water Quality
P.O. Box 144870
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4870
(801) 538-6859

Surface Water Quality

Of the 6,582 river miles surveyed, 74% fully support aquatic life uses, 22% partially support these uses, and 4% do not support aquatic life uses. The most common pollutants impacting rivers and streams are sediments and nutrients. Agricultural practices, such as grazing and irrigation, elevate nutrient and sediment loading into streams. Point sources also contribute to nutrient loads, while natural conditions introduce metals and sediments to streams in some areas. Resource extraction and associated activities, such as road construction, also impact Utah's rivers and streams.

About 62% of the surveyed lake acres fully support aquatic life uses, 36% partially support these uses, and 2% do not support aquatic life uses. The leading problems in lakes include nutrients, siltation, low dissolved oxygen, suspended solids, organic enrichment, noxious aquatic plants, and violations of pH criteria. The major sources of pollutants are grazing and irrigation, industrial and municipal point sources, drawdown of reservoirs, and urban runoff.

Fish and wildlife consumption advisories are posted on the lower portion of Ashley Creek drainage and Stewart Lake in Uintah County due to elevated levels of selenium found in fish, ducks, and American coots.

Ground Water Quality

In general, the quality of ground water in Utah has remained relatively good throughout the State, although some ground water degradation occurs in south central Utah in the metropolitan area of Salt Lake City and along the Wasatch Front area from Payson north to Brigham City. Sources of ground water degradation include agricultural chemical facilities, animal feedlots, storage tanks, surface impoundments, and waste tailings. In 1994, new ground water regulations went into effect.

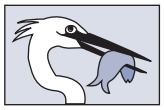
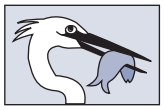
Programs to Restore Water Quality

The State's Nonpoint Source Task Force is responsible for coordinating nonpoint source programs in Utah. The Task Force is a broad-based group with representatives from Federal, State, and local agencies; local governments; agricultural groups; conservation organizations; and wildlife advocates. The Task Force helped State water quality and agricultural agencies prioritize watersheds in need of NPS pollution controls. As best management practices are implemented, the Task Force will update and revise the priority list.

Programs to Assess Water Quality

In 1993, Utah adopted a basin-wide water quality monitoring approach. Intensive surveys have been completed on the lower Bear River, Weber River, and the Utah Lake-Jordan River watersheds. The Green River Basin monitoring began in early 1995, and monitoring began in April 1996 in the Sevier-Virgin River Basins. A fixed-station network was also developed to evaluate general water quality across the State. Utah's surface water quality monitoring program consists of about 200 ambient stations, 7 salinity monitoring stations, and 30 biological monitoring sites. In addition, 135 industrial and municipal sites were monitored.

Individual Use Support in Utah

Designated Use[a]		Percent				
		Good (Fully Supporting)	Good (Threatened)	Fair (Partially Supporting)	Poor (Not Supporting)	Poor (Not Attainable)
Rivers and Streams (Total Miles = 85,916)[b]						
	Total Miles Surveyed	74		22	4	
	6,582		-			0
					100	
	16	0	-	0		0
		98				
	518		-	0	2	0
Lakes (Total Acres = 481,638)						
	Total Acres Surveyed	62		36		
	460,588		0		2	0
		100				
	460,588		0	0	0	0
		99				
	162,760		-	-	1	0

– Not reported in a quantifiable format or unknown.

[a] A subset of Utah's designated uses appear in this figure. Refer to the State's 305(b) report for a full description of the State's uses.

[b] Includes nonperennial streams that dry up and do not flow all year.

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.